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STATINTL MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Personnel
FROM : Chairman, Office of Personnel Advisory Group
SUBJECT : Assessment Center

The Office of Personnel Advisory Group (OPAG) has been asked to consider whether or not the MP Career Service should utilize the management tool known as the "assessment center". To assist with their research, OPAG members reviewed background material on assessment centers and were briefed by [redacted] also briefed OPAG on the present career panel system.

In our two examples in the Agency, OJCS and the Office of Communications, neither one has progressed far enough to render explicit information about career development or management ability nor have these offices been able to explain exactly where the "tool" fits in with their present organizational system. OJCS is further along in the use of this "tool" and plans to evaluate and identify managerial talent at the Branch Chief level - a point in an employee's career which OPAG feels is too late for identifying managers for OP. By comparison, the Office of Communications is now at the developmental state and has not yet completed the administrative procedures for its first center. Assessment centers offer the opportunity to test, evaluate, interview in depth and measure the strengths and weaknesses of the individual. However, the use of assessment centers within the Agency is in its rudimentary stages and has some negative aspects which detract from its effectiveness. For example, it is a very time-consuming process, i.e., administrative requirement can take up to a year to complete; only a few people can attend each session; and follow-up, evaluation and feedback can last several months.

The cost effectiveness of such a program would be difficult to measure. The money spent in developing an assessment center presents an opportunity cost dilemma which has to be evaluated in relation to existing programs and other alternatives. The assessment center would require the commitment of many man-hours by OP and OMS and the absence of employees from their offices for several days during the actual running of the center. The logistical problem of

conducting a session at a site away from day-to-day activities is another consideration. In addition, OPAG is concerned that OMS/PSS is limited in its ability to assume the responsibility for another assessment center without additional resources.

Although OPAG cannot deny there are positive aspects to the assessment center, it does not recommend, at this time, its implementation for the MP Career Service. However, OPAG does not want to close the door on this subject but would suggest taking another look at the progress of the OJCS and Commo assessment centers in one year.

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